



COMMITTEE ON LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

2021 REPORT

Committee on Limited English Proficiency

The Committee on Limited English Proficiency was formed in 2008 under the Access goal of the Judicial Branch's Strategic Plan and charged with "eliminating language barriers to facilities, processes and information that are faced by individuals with limited English proficiency." The committee is co-chaired by Justice Maria Araujo Kahn and Alejandra Donath, Program Manager for the Interpreter and Translator Services Unit (ITS), and is comprised of the following members¹:

Troy Brown
Brittany Kaplan
Richard Loffredo
Brandon Pelegano
Viviana Livesay (Legal Services advisor)
Heather Collins (Support Staff)

The Judicial Branch is committed to ensuring that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals are able to access its facilities, processes, and services. This commitment is evidenced as the Branch finished with the second highest rating among all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, in providing language access in its courts, according to an assessment conducted in 2020 by the National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ) at Fordham Law School.

The pandemic that has engulfed the world since 2020 impacted greatly how the Connecticut Judicial Branch performed its functions. Shifting to remote proceedings and an increased reliance on remote interpreting services were necessary. Through it all, however, the Judicial Branch continued serving the public and ensuring access to justice. The services provided to LEP individuals never stopped. Interpretation and translation services continue to be provided whenever they are needed.

In 2021, ITS covered over 43,000 files that required oral language assistance in 68 different languages/dialects. This includes over 6,500 pre-scheduled events that were covered remotely by either staff and/or contracted interpreters through Microsoft Teams, Cisco technologies and/or telephonically. In addition, over-the-phone interpreting services for over-the-counter language needs were used over 20,000 times in 75 different languages/dialects. ITS translated 217 separate Judicial Branch forms as well as 97 case specific documents in 2021. ITS also translated 15 notices that were specific to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report serves as an update of the work of the Committee on Limited English Proficiency in 2021.

¹The Committee would like to acknowledge Attorney Michelle Fica from Connecticut Legal Services. Her attendance and participation in the Committee meetings has been invaluable.

I. On-Going Initiatives

In its effort to ensure that LEP individuals can access the Judicial Branch's facilities, processes, and information, the Committee has been working over the past year on the following areas:

Continued LEP Training

In 2009, the Judicial Branch developed a mandatory LEP training program for all of its employees that provided information on the federal requirements for the provision of services to LEP individuals, explained the role of the interpreter, and detailed how to obtain language assistance and translation services. This program also offered cultural sensitivity education. Over 2,300 employees attended this half-day program.

In 2017, the LEP training moved to an online format. This 75-minute course provides an overview of the Judicial Branch's obligations to provide services to LEP individuals, details the role of an interpreter, the differences between an interpreter and a translator, and how Judicial Branch employees can obtain language assistance services 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Since its online launch, over 3,300 employees have taken the course. In 2020, this training was revised and re-recorded to reflect updated information.

In 2018, the LEP Committee developed an online training for those entities that contract with the Judicial Branch and provide services to LEP individuals. The training covers the federal requirements regarding the provision of services to LEP individuals, the entity's responsibilities to LEP individuals under the terms of their contract with the Judicial Branch, how an entity can meet its responsibilities, the difference between interpretation and translation, and tips on how to work with interpreters. Since its online launch, over 950 individuals have taken the course.

Judges and family support magistrates were given LEP training in 2013. Additional LEP training was provided to judges in 2016. Since 2013, LEP training has been incorporated into the new judge and family support magistrate orientation program provided to all newly appointed judges and family support magistrates. In 2021, fifteen new judges were appointed and received LEP training.

Issues surrounding limited English proficiency and the requirement to provide services are also part of a larger training that is provided by Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn. This training also covers implicit bias, cultural competency, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Vital Documents

The ongoing identification and translation of vital documents has remained a priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. In 2013 and again in 2017, the Chief Court Administrator requested the Judicial Branch's Executive Directors to identify the vital documents utilized by their Divisions. Interpreter and Translator Services continues the process of translating these documents into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese. In 2021, 217 vital documents were translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese. All forms that have been translated into other languages now have an indicator to alert staff and members of the public that the form is available in other languages.

In addition to vital documents, several notices and instructional materials relating to the use of and access to remote proceedings were translated into Spanish.

Telephonic Bilingual Services

The Judicial Branch has contracted with three vendors for telephonic language assistance services, enabling Judicial Branch staff and individuals who are limited English proficient to bridge the language gap by communicating through the use of a telephonic interpreting service.

Telephonic Bilingual Services are available in more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are available in all Judicial Branch facilities and are also available to staff working outside of Judicial Branch facilities, via a cell phone, when needed to communicate with LEP individuals. In 2021, Telephonic Bilingual Services were used over 20,000 times in 75 different languages/dialects.

Translating Pages on the Judicial Branch's Internet Site

The overwhelming majority of interpreter requests continue to be for the Spanish language (approximately 88%). The next most requested languages are Portuguese and Polish (approximately 3% each). Accordingly, the Judicial Branch continues to translate pages on its website into Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

Website Updated

The Branch's LEP webpage was updated to be more accessible and user-friendly. The website, which has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish, includes information such as how to request an interpreter, links to translated forms, resources for LEP individuals, and tips

for working with interpreters. In addition, an email account has been created and posted on the webpage for members of the public to contact Interpreter and Translator Services directly.

Video Remote Interpreting

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally changed how much of our court business is conducted. Before the pandemic, the overwhelming majority of court cases and interviews were conducted in-person. As a result of the pandemic, it became necessary to shift proceedings to remote platforms. The Judicial Branch dramatically increased its usage of Polycom conference phones and virtual platforms such as Cisco technologies; in addition to introducing the use of the Remote Justice platform. Equipment was purchased for the interpreters to allow their participation for all proceedings in which they are required. Utilizing the remote platforms has enabled Interpreter and Translator Services to cover court proceedings and interviews in a more efficient manner.

Revised Language Access Plan

The LEP Committee reviewed and revised the Judicial Branch's Language Access Plan. The revised Language Access Plan, which was approved by the Chief Court Administrator, has been translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese and posted on the Branch's Internet and Intranet websites.

Information Card

The Committee created a "quick card" that highlights how to request the services of an interpreter at no cost; what the role of an interpreter is; what an interpreter can and cannot do; and tips on how to work with an interpreter. The quick card information is presented in plain language to help ensure that people who are not familiar with interpretation services understand how it works. The quick card has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish and has been distributed to the public libraries within the state in an effort to increase outreach regarding the services provided to the Branch's LEP stakeholders.

II. Future Plans

The LEP Committee recognizes the continuing need for the Judicial Branch to provide access to its facilities, processes, and information to all limited English proficient individuals. In the coming year, the Committee intends to focus on the following areas:

Vital Documents

The translation of vital documents is an important initiative that has been underway since 2013. The Interpreter and Translator Services Unit will continue to translate vital documents into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.

Translated Orders

The LEP Committee proposes to develop a pilot project to test the feasibility of issuing translated case specific court orders. This will allow LEP individuals to leave the courthouse with a written document containing the order of the court in their spoken language.

Training

Training on LEP issues is an ongoing priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. The LEP Committee will develop an online refresher training on when and how to access interpreter and translation services. The Committee will seek to make this refresher training mandatory for all Judicial Branch employees and that it be taken once every year.

The Committee will create an online refresher training for judges. The training will provide an overview of the services provided by the Judicial Branch and how those services can be accessed.

The Committee will also begin work on developing an online tutorial for external stakeholders on the services that the Judicial Branch provides to LEP individuals and how those services can be accessed.

Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn will continue to provide the LEP, Cultural Competency, Implicit Bias and ADA training program to organizations and agencies that interact with the Judicial Branch.

Notices Regarding Interpreter Services and Complaint Process

The LEP Committee will review the signage it has placed in facilities to ensure signage includes language that informs the public that interpreter services are available at no cost to LEP individuals. The Committee will also look into the feasibility of adding similar language on court forms and publications.

The LEP Committee will explore the feasibility of adding language to notices and forms about filing a complaint regarding language assistance services once a complaint process is developed.

INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR SERVICES
YEARLY STATISTICAL REPORT, 2021

ITS provides in-person and remote language assistance for in-court proceedings
TBS provides over-the-phone language assistance for over-the-counter language needs.

LANGUAGE	ITS	TBS
Afro-Asiatic Languages (Amharic, Oromo, Somali)	16	3
Akan languages (Twi)	6	2
Albanian	134	32
Arabic/Moroccan/Egyptian	198	88
Baltic Languages (Lithuanian)		1
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	12	1
Bulgarian	2	
Burmese/Karen/Hakha Chin	23	8
Cambodian	8	4
Chinese Mandarin/Cantonese/Fuzhou	323	88
Creole English-based (Jamaican)	7	1
Czech-Slovak	30	8
Dutch		1
French/Haitian Creole/French Creole	228	155
Gaelige	1	
Georgian	7	
Greek	19	14
Hebrew	5	
Hungarian	5	1
Indigenous languages of Central America (K'iche, Q'anjob'a)	16	
Indigenous languages of South America (Quechua)	1	
Indo-Iranian/Indic languages (Dari, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Sinhalese, Nepalese, Malayalam, Telugu, Farsi/Persian, Pashto, Tamil)	207	106
Italian	14	15
Japanese	13	
Korean	37	6
Laotian	18	9
Macedonian	2	2
Malayo-Polynesian (Indonesian, Bahasa, Tagalog)	4	2
Niger-Congo languages (Lingala, Ewe, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, Wolof, Yoruba, Mandingo)	41	18
Nilotic Languages (Dinka)	1	
Polish	249	131
Portuguese/Cape Verdean	509	551
Romanian	11	1
Russian	84	40
Spanish	20586	18,618
Thai	16	7
Tibetan	16	
Turkic languages (Turkish)	33	24
Ukrainian	60	7
Vietnamese	75	60
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